

Kissinger Sees Soviets Beset, Open to Talks

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Former Secretary of State Suggests Bipartisan Panel to Set Strategies

NEW YORK—Faced with massive internal problems, senior leaders in the Soviet Union are moving gingerly into a "negotiating phase" with the United States in hopes of gaining a respite from East-West tensions at an acceptable diplomatic price, former secretary of state Henry A. Kissinger says.

Kissinger called for a bipartisan U.S. commission to be created immediately after the Nov. 6 election to embark on a "crash program" for arms control strategies and a framework for U.S.-Soviet relations in general that would reduce the threat of nuclear holocaust and avert superpower confrontations.

The commission's aim, he said in an hour-long interview in his Manhattan office, would be conceptual approaches acceptable to both the American public and the Soviet Union.

The path toward negotiations will be "prolonged," Kissinger said, in part because the Soviet leadership has not yet decided on its precise goals for the negotiations.

Nonetheless, in the wake of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko's meeting with President Reagan, opportunities may exist for improving the long-frozen relationship between Washington and Moscow, he suggested.

"The significance of the Gromyko visit is, most importantly, that it took place," Kissinger said, although "it was the first part of an overture in what could be a three-act opera."

Predicting no further steps, such as another Gromyko meeting with Reagan or Secretary of State George P. Shultz, before the election, Kissinger said he considered such dramatic new overtures less desirable than efforts to promote serious, less visible exchanges.

Kissinger focused in the interview on the changing Soviet attitude that Gromyko's visit appeared to signal. Kissinger presented a broad picture of an aging Kremlin leadership beset by internal rivalries between the Communist Party's cadres on the one hand and its defense, foreign policy and intelligence bureaucracies on the other, and facing problems with the Soviet economy and Eastern European satellites that challenge the foundations of the Soviet system.

ward agreements with the Soviets generally, he said.

"What it [the situation] tells me is that it is very important that we confront them with concrete proposals so they have specific decisions to make," he said.

Kissinger said he believed that Reagan, who ran for president as a critic of detente, had come to accept the necessity of reaching a basic accommodation with the Soviet Union.

But he said he worried that some administration officials still opposed negotiations and that the president had not focused on the necessity of making specific proposals and general assertions of good will to Moscow.

"I see no substantial difference between what the administration now says and what we used to characterize as detente," he said with a

small smile. "President Reagan has probably learned a dimension as president that as a campaigner he did not have to address.

"Undoubtedly there are elements in the bureaucracy that have consistently doubted the utility of any negotiation, and especially of arms-control negotiation," he said in an apparent reference to Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard N. Perle and other administration hard-liners. "This in itself is not bad. It produces a healthy debate within the government. But at some point there must be a focus for decision . . .

"The bigger danger I see is not any lack of [Reagan's] sincerity but the danger that some people may believe that one can achieve results simply by an abstract psychological exercise of reassuring the Soviets and convincing the public that we

are sincere," he said. "That is not enough. It has to be translated into a concrete program."

Accordingly, Kissinger said, he is proposing that Reagan appoint the task force to work out a domestic consensus on U.S. goals in its relationship with the Soviets.

"I think it would be extremely helpful if, right after the election, a crash program were started on a bipartisan basis on which direction we should go," he said. "I would like to get some consensus, at least within the government, of what exactly it is we're trying to accomplish that can then be conveyed to the Soviets as a concept before you then embody it in proposals."

At the same time, he said, the administration should set up a "back channel" for informal communications with Moscow—both to help prepare the way for arms control proposals and to defuse possible regional confrontations between the two countries.

"The back channel, I think, could be set up immediately," he said. "I think this is particularly important in crisis management."



